1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

114 of the chaguar (chahuar).[1] This statement, which is erroneous, is due to
262 the similarity of sound existing between chaguar[2] and chañar.[3] The *fruits* of the latter are eaten by the Indians, whilst of the former only the rootstock is edible.

251 By drying, the Choroti preserve vegetables against seasons of shortened food supply.

263 Personally I have not seen the Choroti use salt, but, nevertheless, they possess this condiment. Possibly they, like the Lengua, extract salt from the ash of a plant growing on the Chaco.[4] Salt-making from vegetable ash is known to many primitive peoples.[5]

264 Among the Choroti I never saw men and women eating together.

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252 The preparing of food is, as a rule, the work of the women. The Choroti are not dainty about their food, and the uncleanliness which is a distinguishing trait in culinary matters among these Indians surpasses almost anything I have ever observed among other primitive peoples, with the exception of the Mataco Indians. Of the latter, however, my experience is limited to only a few families, and it may be unfair to judge the whole tribes from those.

271 Water, often muddy, ordinarily forms the drink of the Choroti. When in the dry season the Indians are on the move, or from some reason or other find themselves far away from any river, they sometimes suffer very badly from lack of water.

273 In the season for harvesting wild fruits, such as algaroba, tusca, and chañar, an intoxicating fruit beer is brewed. During the time of year that I visited the Choroti, there were no fruits of which any intoxicating beverage could be brewed; consequently I never had an opportunity of observing either the brewing of beer, or any drinking carousal. This led me to suppose that the art of brewing fermented liquor was unknown to the Choroti. Nowadays the Choroti have learnt from the Chiriguano also how to brew maize beer. Of the Choroti method of beer-brewing, Nordenskiöld has given the following description:

»When tusca beer is to be made, the fruit is first of all ground, and they water added, the whole being thereupon left in a dirty animal hide,

[1] von Rosen (3), p. 9.
[2] Bromelia serra.
[3] Gourliea decorticans.
[4] Hawtrey (1), p. 287.
[5] For one method of producing salt from plants, see von Rosen (4), p. 240.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

or large calabashes, to ferment. One certain night, I was present at a 273
beer-fermenting in a Choroti village. Proceedings commenced by two men sitting in the men's club house on either side of the fire, singing, with their backs to each other, and beating time with calabash rattles. After a while they continued this round about the hide in which the brew was fermenting. A man and a youth were singing, accompanied by a rattle, turning their faces up to the moon. Elsewhere, here and there, other men were bawling and plying rattles. Then the earthenware drum was brought

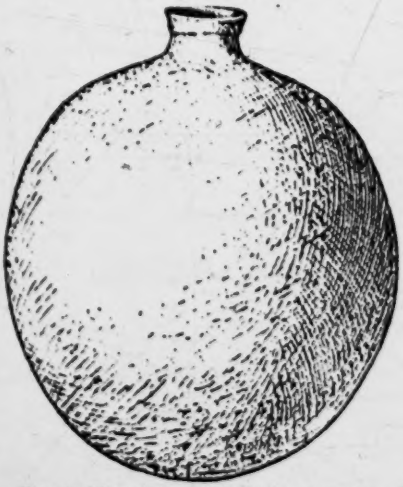

Fig. 133. Water pitcher. Yellowish brown earthenware. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/6. Riksm. 03. 3. 145.

Fig. 134. Water pitcher with carrying cord of caraguatá. Reddish-brown earthenware. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/6. Riksm. 03. 3. 146.

out, and placed on a ring formed of straw. Monotonous drum beats thereupon gave accompaniment to the singing. This stopped about midnight, and there was a rush down to the river where some fishing was done, with a fairly good result. The fish was then grilled and eaten. This night supper having been satisfactorily discussed, singing was resumed and went on, supported by one drum and four rattles. The songs seemed to me to consist of nothing but refrains, something like: 'huh, huh, huh, huh, huh, lah eh lah, huh, lah eh lah, . . . huh, huh, huh, lah eh lah'. The singing was at first low, then suddenly rising in loudness, then again subsiding low. Many were raucously bellowing in unison. When one lot

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

273 of singers were tired out, others took their turn. In the morning there was some more fishing, and for breakfast was drunk the tusca beer that had been made with so much trouble, after having been strained through a dirty bag, and served up in calabash bowls. The Choroti believe that by singing they hasten the fermentation of the beer.

The tusca beer is of an acidulous, refreshing taste, but has a sickly smell.

The fruits of the chañar are boiled, whereupon the mixture is allowed to ferment.

The fruits of the algaroba are ground, and warmed up in water, then, like the foregoing, the brew is left to ferment in huge, filthy, calabashes, or in very large troughs of the wood of the bottle-tree.[1] I have seen the Ashluslay preparing yeast by chewing part of the ground algaroba, and then spitting it out into the rest. Chañar beer is of a sour-sweet, somewhat nauseous, taste; algaroba beer is good. The latter has a sweet, somewhat astringent, taste. When long fermented, it is highly intoxicating. Maize beer I have seen brewed here. It is especially well known to a great many tribes in South America. It has a pleasant and refreshing taste.»[2]

271 When, during their wanderings, the Indians of the Chaco do not come across any rivers, lagoons or wells, and thus find themselves threatened by a lack of water, they collect the water that, after rain, has gathered at the base of the leaves of the caraguatá plant, where it will keep fresh for many weeks.[3]

271 [415] 482 The Choroti fetch and keep water in large, oval, sometimes spherical, earthenware vessels. When these vessels, like the one reproduced in fig. 123, are without handles, they are carried on the back by means of a caraguata net, the carrying cord of which is either placed across the forehead or across the chest. Water pitchers are, however, as a rule provided with two vertically placed handles, and also a shallow groove which runs through the latter, the whole being designed to give a hold to the carrying cord (see fig. 124). The cord is rested across the forehead

[1] Chorisia insignis.

[2] Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 89—91.

[3] Professor von den Steinen writes of the Chaco Indians of northern Chaco that they collect water from the caraguatá »in denen sich auf dem Grunde des Blätterkranzes das Regenwasser ansammelt und Monate lang verhältnismässig frisch erhält» von den Steinen (1), p. 326. See also Grubb (1), pp. 95 and 96.

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CHAPTER V.

The Choroti (5). Narcotics and Intoxicants. Games and amusements.

Different kinds of beer. Drinking customs. Tobacco-smoking. Flutes and whistles. Trumpets. Music bows. Drums and drumsticks. Rattles. Dancing. Gambling games. Various kinds of ball games. Toys. Pastimes.

Beer and tobacco form the intoxicants and narcotics in which the Choroti indulge. 273

As I have pointed out in the foregoing, I never had an opportunity of witnessing how the Choroti brew their intoxicating beverages, which they prepare from divers kinds of wild fruit. During the time of my visit to the tribe, such wild fruits were not ripe, so the Indians were reduced to drinking water, more or less muddy. Had my visit coincided with the fruit-harvesting season, then I should have seen that the Choroti are great lovers of beer. Baron Nordenskiöld, who is thoroughly conversant with the beverages and the drinking customs of the Choroti, has shown that the beers that these Indians make from tusca, chañar and maize are tolerably innocent, whilst, on the other hand, algaroba beer is strongly alcoholic, owing to the algaroba fruit being very rich in sugar.[1] The Choroti also make beer out of water melon, but in the literature I have not seen any statement as to the intoxicating properties of water melon beer.

The Choroti's drinking customs Nordenskiöld describes as follows: "During the months of November and December, when the fruit of the algaroba is ripe, there are in consequence in the villages of the Choroti mad drinking carousals, daily orgies, in which the hapless ethnographer

[1] Nordenskiöld (13), p. 89.

[p. 135]

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

273 has to take part if he wishes to keep on good terms with the Indians. — »Among the Ashluslay I have taken a hand in several large-scale drinking carousals, and among the Choroti in some smaller ones. It proved an interesting experience, but it required a great deal of fortitude to be able to go through with it. In most villages there is a special [361] place set apart for drinking. There the men begin to foregather about noon, each man bringing his sitting mat and his calabash bowl of a capacity of two to three litres. Huge calabashes of beer are brought by the women. Sometimes the beer is decanted into a large earthenware vessel, out of which it is served. At a festivity where old man Aslù was the host, algaroba beer was handed round to the guests in a genuine European night-chamber, of well-known shape. What lees or dregs there may be in the beer receptacle, the partakers simply fish out with their hands, and then strain between their filthy fingers.

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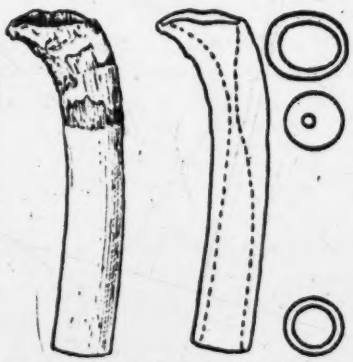

Fig. 153. Tobacco pipe of bamboo. The figure shows the mouthpiece turned downwards. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/6. Riksm. 03. 3. 228.

»A guest, especially if he has the misfortune of being very popular, is very well treated. He is provided with a sitting mat and a calabash holding two or three litres. When he sits down, all wave to him with the flat of the hand, and he must make a similar response. That constitutes the greeting of welcome. After that, it is a matter of drinking, for here the motto is 'no heeltaps', and one must not be uncivil. When one has managed to get a litre down, without throwing it some more the palm-waving is done. The old men sitting next to one, draw their more or less dirty fingers across one's mouth. This is the height of friendliness. If, after all this, one has to run away for a moment, one must by no means forget to wave the hand to one's neighbours and say 'paa', for if not, one is exceedingly unmannerly. The worst of it is that one must come back, and hold out, right through the feast even, whilst one's hosts are drunk and yelling, making speeches, spitting in the festive bowl, and generally feeling themselves good and hearty. Without giving a wipe to the pipe-stem, one has [276] to smoke, turn and turn about, with dirty, slavering, old men.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

»When the old men have felt themselves properly tuned up, then they have painted my face black with soot and spittle. They have wanted to pull out my eyebrows and eyelashes, and they have laughed my long and ugly beard to scorn, and they have wanted to bore through my ears.

»All during these drinking carousals, when everybody was drunk, I have never heard a hard word spoken; never noticed the slightest quarrel arising. When the Indian is full of his home-brewed beer, he is not pleasant, but he does not get insolent; he belongs to the type of drunkard who wants to embrace everybody, and in whom the manifestations of friendliness become unpleasantly exaggerated. He gets blatantly valiant, and shouts about warlike deeds. He discusses plans of campaigns, but has forgotten all about it when he is sober again. He sings and he is happy.»[1]

The Choroti Indians are inveterate smokers. As the tobacco which these Indians grow and prepare is of a very inferior quality, they are keen on bartering tobacco off the whites. Frequently the Choroti mix their tobacco with shavings of an aromatic tree bark.[2]

Tobacco pipes consist of pieces of bamboo, fig. 153, or wood, figs. 154—161. The latter are straight, that is to say, the longitudinal axis of the tobacco retainer is in a straight line with the longitudinal axis of the stem.[3] The pipes of bamboo are straight, or of a slightly curving bend, fig. 153. Choroti pipes are as a rule made in one piece, figs. 153—161, but composite pipes (pipes with the stem fitted into the bowl) do occur, although they are exceedingly rare.[4]

The pipes have in the forward end, as a rule, a funnel-shaped depression in which the tobacco is stuffed (the tobacco retainer). From the bottom of the funnel the smoke passes through a channel, the diameter of which is only a couple of millimetres in the part nearest the tobacco retainer but usually widens towards the opening of the mouthpiece (see sections, figs. 153—161). In pipes with a wide mouthpiece opening, the latter as a rule is provided with a vegetable fibre filter, which cleanses

[1] Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 89, 91 and 93.

[2] As to Indian conceptions of intoxicating beverages, tobacco and other narcotics, see for example Karsten (5), pp. 28—72.

[3] The Ashluslay, neighbours of the Choroti, possess both straight and angle-bent pipes. In the Ashluslay pipes of the latter kind the longitudinal axis of the tobacco retainer and that of the stem form an angle of about 90 degrees. Nordenskiöld (18), figs. 41—43.

[4] A composite pipe from the Choroti is reproduced and described by Nordenskiöld (21), fig. 8.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6

their rattle gourds, whilst the men provided with drums beat them. The girl in whose honour the dance was held was standing motionless and silent at the entrance of the hut reclining against the wall and had to remain so during the whole ceremony. Sometimes, when towards evening she got tired and was on the point of falling asleep, one of the medicine-men came up to her and shook his rattle close to her face as if to keep her awake. The ceremony began in the afternoon and was continued with short pauses throughout the whole evening until midnight. I was informed that as long as the dance goes on the girl need not be veiled, but as soon as the conjuration is finished for the night she must have her face and her whole body well covered. During the whole period that the dance is performed she is moreover obliged to fast, avoiding fish and meat and living only on some light vegetable food.

I may add that all the men who took part in the ceremony were painted on the face in one way or another. Some of them simply had the face coated red with roucou or black with charcoal, whereas others had X-shaped or other patterns painted on the cheeks. The men's faces are always painted in this way at the conjurations of the Indians, and these paintings have a purely magical significance.

The drinking of algaroba beer also forms part of the magical practices at the feast, but it is strictly limited to the men.

The object of all these ceremonies is to protect the girl against the evil spirits, the *möhsek*, by which she is believed to be particularly attacked during her unclean condition. The spirits try to enter into her through the face — especially through those parts where there is a natural opening of the body, such as the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the mouth — and also through the ventral parts, the consequence being, if they succeed in doing so, that she will fall ill and die, or become supernaturally pregnant and give birth to a monster. It is in this way that the Indians account for the birth of those deformed children which they kill directly after birth. To prevent such frightful accidents the girl's head and body are covered after the conjuration is finished for the night. By means of the dancing, chanting, drumming, etc. the evil demons who take an interest in the girl and swarm about her are conjured and rendered harmless. According to the idea of the Indians she is not only protected for the time being against their attacks, but she will also retain a certain power of resistance against them in the future.

The puberty of a girl is not celebrated in all cases among the Choroti with so many ceremonies as in the case just described, but the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

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Preparations being made for the great drinking-feast among the Choroti. A goat's hide is fixed in the ground so as to form a vessel, in which the beer is brewed.

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Choroti Indians assembled for a drinking-feast under a shady algaroba tree.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

We have already seen that the most appreciated of these drinks is algaroba beer, which by the Mataco and the Choroti is called *atäs*, by the Tobas again *maplyí*. The tree itself and its fruit is called *oáh* in the Mataco and the Choroti language, in the Toba language *map*. The sacred beer is prepared with the utmost care and with certain religious or magical ceremonies. At this preparation there appears a strict division of labour between men and women. Although the women are not allowed to drink of the beer, they seemingly perform the larger part of the work. They collect the fruit in the forest, carrying it home in their large caraguatá bags, and afterwards mash it in mortars. Some old women start to chew the fruit, mixing it well with saliva, whereupon they spit it out into a goat's hide, fixed in the ground by means of sticks in such a way that it forms a sort of vessel. The goat's hide is used by the Choroti and by the Argentine Mataco, whereas the Tobas and the Bolivian Mataco use a wooden trough for the purpose. Lastly, hot water is poured over the mashed fruit.

These preparations require nearly a whole day. The most essential thing still remains, namely the fermentation, and to effect this is a duty solely incumbent on the men, since women as a rule do not take part in conjurations. The fermentation is sacred, because it means the birth of the good spirit. Now this happens in the night, but night is the time when evil spirits move about. According to the belief of the Indians, the invisible persecutors appear in great numbers in order to prevent the birth of the good spirit and interfere with the drink so that it cannot ferment and is entirely spoiled. Therefore special precautions must be taken for the critical time. The brewing of the algaroba beer for the great festivals during the algaroba season is — especially among the primitive Choroti — a matter that concerns the whole community. Hence, at the approach of night, the men arrive from all houses with their rattle gourds, sit round the hide or trough, and begin to chant a noisy, monotonous song without words, shaking the rattles in the rhythm of their chant. This ceremony is called by the Choroti *nissammaha oáh*, by the Tobas *niapilák map*, and its most conspicuous object is to prevent the spirits from spoiling the beer. Since the new moon is believed to promote fermentation, a moonlight night is preferably chosen for the ceremony. The chant is typical of the Indian conjurations in the Chaco. It is always begun in a loud voice; then the voice gradually dies down, so that the last tones are only heard as a low and distant muttering. Thereupon they start again from the beginning, and so forth. In addi-

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

tion to the men shaking rattles, one or more Indians are beating drums and chanting. These noisy ceremonies are continued with short intervals during the whole night. When one party of Indians are tired and stop to rest for a moment, they are relieved by another party, since it is considered very important that there should be no interruption in the ceremonies; otherwise they would lose something of their effect. In the early morning the danger is believed to have passed; the fermentation has taken place, and the evil spirits have not been able to approach the drink and spoil it.

Although this negative object of the rites is particularly emphasized by the Indians, they also have a positive object which is indicated by the very expression »hurry on the fermentation». As we have already seen, the fruit of which the drink is made is believed to be animated by a spirit, and it is the same spirit that is active in the fermented, intoxicating beer. The rites described, while they are supposed to keep off evil spirits, are also intended to influence magically the plant-spirit itself and to bring it to its highest point of development, which is marked by the fermentation. This is partly effected through the chanting, the shaking of rattles, and the drumming, partly through the procedure of mixing the mashed fruit with saliva. The saliva really has the property of bringing about fermentation, and this phenomenon is explained by the superstitious Indian as due to the supernatural virtues which this secretion is believed to possess. Even the fact that only *old* women chew the fruit is probably not accidental. Old people have by nature a stronger magical power than the young and their saliva has therefore greater efficacy.

The Chaco Indians not only try to promote the growth of the fruits by shaking rattles and drumming, but also by *dancing*. Thus the Toba dance *Nahót dónnaran* is not only performed in cases of sickness, but also with a view to »hurrying on» the chanar fruit (*niapilák tákkai*). Once I witnessed such a ceremony. The chañar fruit — next to the algaroba the most important of the fruits growing in the Chaco forests — reaches maturity in the month of October and forms the staple food of the Indians during that month. The dance was performed in the following way. The fruit gathered in during the day was spread out on cloths or big hides on the ground outside the houses, where they are generally laid to dry. The dance took place at night. A young man began to dance alone, stamping alternately with his feet on the ground, without using any rattle, and chanting at first in a low voice. Gradually his movements